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Letter dated 2 September 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In keeping with my responsibility to engage in preventing the outbreak or escalation of conflict, I take this opportunity to share my deep concern about the security, humanitarian and human rights situation in Rakhine State in Myanmar. I have followed closely the events unfolding there since 25 August, which have given rise to the third major wave of violence in the region in the past five years.

I welcome the Council's discussion of this matter on 30 August. On that occasion, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča shared the assessment of the situation in Rakhine following the latest organized armed attacks against the Myanmar security forces by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. I am deeply concerned about reports of continued violence, including indiscriminate violence allegedly committed during operations conducted by those security forces. Early reports indicate that the violence in Rakhine has affected mainly women, children and the elderly. Tens of thousands have sought refuge in Bangladesh, some of them wounded and in desperate need of urgent care, and thousands are stranded at the border and many have lost their lives trying to flee the violence.

The current situation, appalling as it already is, risks degenerating into a humanitarian catastrophe with implications for peace and security that could continue to expand beyond the borders of Myanmar. While the main responsibility to provide security and assistance to all those in need lies with the Government of Myanmar, our collective attention and active engagement will be crucial in helping to prevent the further suffering of all communities in Rakhine State.

It is beyond a doubt that underlying grievances have festered for far too long. The current situation only accentuates the urgent need for holistic solutions to address the complex root causes of violence. The Government of Myanmar understands this critical need. Its establishment of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State represented a frank recognition of the untenable situation in Rakhine and the need for new approaches.

It is important for the international community to send a strong message emphasizing the need for support and constructive cooperation towards a broader political strategy and policy framework that can help to end the vicious cycle in Rakhine.

Furthermore, the international community has a responsibility to undertake concerted efforts to prevent further escalation of the crisis. I also urge the members of the Security Council to press for restraint and calm to avoid a humanitarian

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catastrophe, full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and the continued presence and safety of the United Nations and partners to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need without disruption.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**